

A
S E R M O N
Preached before the
K I N G
A T
V V H I T E - H A L L ,
January xvj. 1675.

By *ROGER HATWARD, D.D.*
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

Published by His Majesties special Command.

L O N D O N ,
Printed for *Thomas Basset*, at the Sign of the *George*, near
St. Dunstan's Church, in *Fleetstreet*, 1676.

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SERMON

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WHITE-HALL

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The Prophet *Malachi* in the 3^d chapter of his
Propheſie and the 14th verſe, complains
thus of the Jews :

*Ye have ſaid it is vain to ſerve God, and
what profit is there that we have kept his
ordinance?*

Wiſdom and Goodneſs do not delight to
exact thoſe ſervices, which are neither for
the advantage of the impoſer nor obſerver,
and when power enforces ſuch it renders
them and it ſelf irkſom and tedious: Since
the righteouſneſs of men cannot profit their Ma-
ker, we cannot reaſonably think He ſhould

enjoy them any thing, which it is not their advantage to observe: Were His Commandments fruitless, they would unavoidably prevent that cheerful obedience they do require, by stifling those hopes that should inspire it; some few *superstitious Flatterers* they might gain upon, *Lovers and Friends* they would have none; to labour for the wind which satisfieth not, would chill the warmest affections, and force the humblest heart to complain as those in my Text do.

Of whom I have only this to note, when lately they sate by the waters of *Babylon* they wept when they remembred *Sion*, and their language then no doubt was, *O how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of hosts! one day in thy Courts is better than a thousand!* And now through the mercies of God they are there: But scarce was the Altar warm with the Sacrifice, but the vows and the tears they had offer'd for the House of God when she lay in the dust, are turned into scorn and contempt now she is in her glory; and they talk at such a rate, as if they had never been, either in *Babylon* or in the Temple; *Your words have been stout against me, verie the 13th; stout indeed, for*

*We have said it is vain to serve God, and
what profit is there that we have kept his
ordinance?*

A Bold charge! that the Service of God was a stale useless device, an unprofitable imposition on their labour and time, their Folds and their Granaries were emptied, their business and pleasures interrupted, their Spirits and wits pall'd, and they nothing advantag'd by it; and therefore in the next verse they go on in the same strain, *the proud are happy, those that work wickedness prosper, and those that tempt God (by such bold defiance, and never trouble themselves with crouching before Him) are delivered*: How happy was *Harpalus*, who never was at the charge of a grain of Incense on the Gods? I would this language were as obsolete as 'tis truly barbarous! and that there were none that gloried in it as a brave and lofty Idiom! But though there were none that publicly avowed, or secretly thought the Service of the *Lord of Lords* is useless; yet since our evil lusts are continually endeavouring (with so much success) to make it so, I hope it will not be lost time (on both

A Sermon preached

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accompts) to justifie the wisdom of our being here; and shew, that we are no where employed on a better accompt, than in the *Courts of the Lord's House*, and that he never requir'd it of us to *seek his face in vain*.

And in order to it, I hope I may take the *Being of a God*, and the *right of His service*, for granted, and if any in the mad hurry of their lusts deny the one, or the other, I would only desire to know of them, how they came by their own Beings; and what title they can shew to any service they expect, which is not meerly of others courtesie, and may not soon be cut off, if there be none due to God.

I have then no more to do, but to declare,

1. What the *Service* here meant is.
2. What the certain profits of it are.
3. What are the causes of that *vanity* men are so ready to charge it with.

The sense of the Divine Perfections naturally seizes us with *admiration*, and *this* (if our guilt interpose not, to turn the *light of his countenance* into a *consuming fire*) soon grows into the highest *reverence* and *love*, which is the principal, the eternal *service* of God, which (if it be not toil'd and weakened by our worldly lusts) cannot lye cloyster'd in our breasts, but must, by its mighty force, break out into that *lowly homage* and *ready obedience*, which are the necessary products of it,
and

and the other *services* that we owe him: The first of these (*his worship*) is the subject of the Text, as the whole scope of the Prophet shews, which is to regulate those abuses, to correct that Heathenism, which stole with them out of the Captivity into the second Temple: This being a Duty we owe to Him, first as his Creatures, then as sinful and miserable, but not past hope, consists of those acts which are the clearest acknowledgments of our entire dependance on his goodness, and subjection to his authority, such are our humble confessions, prayers, praises, and meek receiving his laws, for what other solemn recognition of our honour of Him can we make, than the devoting our selves to his Mercy and his Government.

The Ordinance of Sacrifice, mention'd in the Text, seems indeed to have been the whole of the Jewish Temple Service, but if we observe, from the Prophets, the low account God made of it, we must conclude, that (what antiquity soever it boast) it was but the shadow of this reasonable service; What designed prospect it had (as a Type or visible Prophecy) on the Sacrifice of our Saviour's Body, I do not enquire, since there is not any notice taken of it by Moses in his Laws, to excite the Peoples Faith or Devotion; but that (besides that obedience which it chiefly intended) it was an oblation of the Offerer himself, by his representative, to God, *ἡγιασμένον εὐχαριστίας καὶ ἁγίου*,

Jer. 7. 23.
Psal. 50. 5.

as *Philo* describes it, visible confessions, prayers, and praises, is so obvious a meaning of it, that none can miss or doubt of; nor was this way of Worship meerly trifling and scenical, but (if we consider the time, the place, the temper of that People) necessary to save them from falling into the tempting Idolatries of the Nations, 'till such time as the World was prepared for the *Holy Offering* foretold in the 1. chapter, 11. verse, the

Apol. 2. λογικὴ καὶ ἀναιμακτος θυσία εὐχης καὶ ὑπακουλῆς, as *Justin*
Con. Marc. *Martyr* renders it, *mundities sacrificorum*, as *Tertullian*,
 c. 22. the sacrifices of prayer, praises, and a broken and
Pl. 50. 14, contrite Spirit.
 15.

This is that true spiritual Worship our Blessed Saviour hath establish'd, having scattered those clouds of smoke, ashes, and blood, that darkned the Temple, by the clear discoveries of Gods Will, and the doubts and fears which darkned Mens Souls, by the greatest encouragements of his Spirit to assist, and Himself to intercede for them; and those two positive Rites he hath super-added to it, are only the early dedication, and frequent rendition of our selves to God, ratified by the usual Solemnities of Baptizing and Feasting, which he consecrated to the remembrance of the two greatest Blessings, *His Spirit*, and *His Blood*.

By which it appears, how necessary the revelation of the Gospel was to our comfortable and

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acceptable Service of God; had he not shown us Himself by his Son, told us how, and in what Name we are to approach Him, what we are to ask of Him, and what will please Him, we must have wandred in the dark after the Heathens, multiplied our Gods and our Altars, and at length, being tired with a vain search, have rear'd one to the *unknown God*.

Lastly, as for those Rites and Modes Men are so fierce against, would they would believe us when we plainly avow, they are no parts of the Christian Worship, but since the Gospel (not meant for a *ritual* but *rule of righteousness*) gives not one direct Precept for any the most material Circumstance in it, and confusion and disorder must, without miracles, expose and ruin it, therefore it is necessary, that some should be appointed and observed: And those that are scared from the Service of God, by every little Mode in it that is not of Divine institution, must leave, not this but all Churches, and finally fall out with their own most careful Addressles to God; so uneasie to it self, as well as others, is this superstitious fear of offending God by such little things, as do not deserve his most wise and glorious Anger, yea so unfriendly to the very Service it self hath it prov'd, that I fear it hath emboldened too many, that are more hardy, to lay it by wholly, as a nice and troublesome, or

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to trifle with it as an indifferent thing, and made it too necessary for us to prove, that *it is not in vain for us to serve God*, which is the next thing I am to do.

As our inward Honour is the Principle of our outward Service, so is this Service the nourishment of that Honour, and so the whole proof will lye upon this Enquiry, What real benefit redounds to our Souls, and to the World, by the Reverence of God upheld therein? We dare not think so meanly of Him, as that He designs any advantage to Himself by it; if we think the glory He requires of us by it is any new accession to Him, or any thing more than the communication of his Goodness to us, under the pretence of adoring Him, we advance our selves, as if we with our hands lift up, with our *Hallelujahs*, did support his Throne.

Again, that his Service is useful to procure the pardon of our sins, the care of his Providence, and Eternal Life we are all assur'd, but who is so foolish as to think, that there is any natural virtue in our breath, which grows cold upon our lips, to draw down these Heavenly Influences? or so immodest to presume, that these great favours are the just purchase of a few good words, a little patient attendance, and lowly behaviour? It remains then, that the great profit of our Worship is not in any effects or impressions it makes upon

upon God, with whom is no shadow of change, but in those dispositions it begets in us, whereby we are fitted for the Divine Bounty; therefore the first and immediate benefit of it is to our Souls; and the good influence it hath upon them, is to frame them to the Divine Likeness.

'Twas the sense of the best Heathens; that the imitation of God is the best Worship of Him; that it is the proper result of it; if we do not flatter with our lips, is evident, because the true veneration of any thing, transforms all the thoughts and desires into its resemblance, *beholding the glory of God we are changed into the same image*; which image is not a dead Idol of the Brain, the phantastick wealth of that wild *Athenian*, who told all the Ships in the Haven for his own, but vital Goodness, *Righteousness and true Holiness*, which are the only participation of the Divine Nature we are capable of. Behold then the Treasures of the Temple! for sure all the Graces of Gods Spirit, and all those Divine and Heavenly Dispositions, that enlarge, strengthen, and adorn the Spirit of a Man, that make it equal to all good actions and evil accidents, that fit him to be a God to others, a Heaven to himself, and a Friend to his God, do amount to no contemptible store: Those that will allow Virtue to be no more than some common Matter, stamp'd with Authority, do by that grant it to be current Coin, but cer-

² Cor. 3. 18.

tainly 'tis hard for any to be in earnest and say, that those Excellencies which have civilized the World, and support Societies, which put Men in the firmest possession of their own and one anothers Hearts, which all Men admire, and the worst counterfeit, should not be worth the looking after.

To shew how effectual an Instrument the Worship of God is to the obtaining of them, I shall not insist upon the Divine Appointment, which yet, were it but *clay* and *spittle*, were enough to justify its sufficiency, for we live in an Age, wherein not all other only, but even the Divine Authority is suspected, and to quote the Text is judged by some as unconcluding in Divinity, as by others in Philosophy. Nor will I urge the approbation of those, who have faithfully tried it, and by its Ministry arriv'd to be great Examples of Goodness, and the vicious Habits and Lives of those that despise and neglect it: However this may be evaded, yet the force of these plain Considerations may, I hope, by *Gods grace*, make it undeniable.

1. That the *Reverence of God* is the only firm Foundation to build a true and stable Goodness on: The Laws of Nature, by that mixture of Natures that is in us, are so easie to be misinterpreted, confounded, and shaken, that the structure must needs be tottering that is built upon them;

them; and how faint and flexible must all outward engagements to it be, when a more cogent inconvenience presses it, so that these leave it a meer chance thing, just as circumstances fall out, whether there be any obligation to it or no: But the Reverence of the Great God preserves it ever firm and inviolable, over-awes all powers that may assault it, and makes the strongest temptations against it to be its greatest glory; *Walk before me* (says God to Abraham) *and be perfect.* Gen. 17. 1. But how can this Reverence be preserved in our hearts, without frequent and solemn attendance and adoration of Him, any more than the Authority of a King, without his Courts of Justice and Judgment? The strongest habits, yea those natural affections, that are most deeply engrav'd on our hearts, wear away gradually by disuse and strangeness: The Principles of Reason, Consent of Nations, Order and Beauty of the Universe, may keep alive the Belief of his Being; but these (without the frequent and solemn proclamation of his Will, and invocation of his Name) are but as the dead Records of a Chronicle or Calendar, which will no better keep up the Honour of the Creator, than they do the Wonders of the Creation. Soon would the incursions of worldly vanities, seconded with our own sensual lusts, bear down that *ἐμφυτον πρὸς θεὸν κοινονία*, that natural inclination Clem. Alex. we have to God, and all the Characters he hath left

left of Himself in our Conscience, or in the Creation, if they were not often quickened and refreshed by the most devout remembrances; and that deep forgetfulness of God (which we call Atheism) is not born with, nor suddenly seizes upon any, but creeps upon them insensibly, by the disuse of his Service.

2. But supposing we could preserve the Reverence of God without it, yet neither can this, or any other Principle make us good, without his assistance to make it present and powerful. This is a Truth, which the Conscience of the worst Men seals, for why else do they fly to Nature, Necessity, and Impossibility, to be their Compurgators? And the Confessions of the best do avow, who finding the greatest difficulty to be rooted in themselves, cry out with the Apostle, Rom. 7. 24. *Oh wretched men that we are who shall deliver us!* Yea, and those that never heard of the mighty Wind on Pentecost, yet would not grant, that any could be excellent, *sine afflatu divino*, so the Orator; *χωρὶς θεῆς συνεργίας*, so Hierocles. And however Men may pride themselves in their *αὐτεξουσίας*, and think their Souls can mend themselves when they list, yet they dare not trust their Bodies, when sick and languishing, to the weak remains of life and strength, to effect their own recovery; *Arise, take up thy bed and walk*, would be a scornful taunt from any Mouth but our Makers; some new Spirits

rits and Succours they are forc'd to flye to, to joyn with and reinforce their poor baffled powers, for what can they do, when they themselves are oppress'd and out of order? There is indeed an *αὐτοκίνητον*, a self-moving power in the Soul, which can never be lost, there is an Elatery, a *motus restitutionis*, an endeavour to Goodness in the Conscience, which cannot be extinguished; but when this power is corrupted, when this spring is rusted, and a mighty weight lyes upon it, what weak effects are we to expect from it? When the *light within us is darkness*, when reason it self (the *τὸ ἡγεμονικόν*) hath tamely given up its Sovereignty, to be led captive by divers lusts, how can it alone bring about its restauration?

And now, if the one necessity of the Divine Assistance be admitted, I know not how the other of humble applications to Him can modestly be denied. Gods Grace descends not like the common Blessings of the Light and Showers, whether Men desire it or no, it were not grace but force, not assistance but violence, were it not earnestly and humbly sought; *Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find.* Mat. 7. 7. And of the success of this there can be no doubt, if we consider in the next place,

3. The direct propriety our Worship of God hath to make us good: There are but two ways, without miracle, whereby we may ever hope it, by

by being clearly instructed, and sufficiently obliged and encouraged to it, whatsoever doth these doth edifie, all else is but empty noise and rituality. Now what clearer accompts of Goodness can we desire, than those we have from the Laws and Life of Goodness it self, which took a Body and dwelt among us? and what stronger bonds could Wisdom and Love have knit, than those of Duty and Interest, of Gratitude and Hope, of Assistance and Success? where our Maker intreats, our Saviour bleeds, his Spirit and our Consciences contend with us, where his terrours do beset us, his bowels of compassion yern towards us, and the Heavens are open'd before us, how is it possible we break through all to our ruin? These are the engagements God lays on us in his Worship, but we are not meerly passive there, we come not to be enchanted and chained, but to bind all these upon our selves by our own act and deed; when we *confess*, we do not tell a sad story, but abjure our iniquities before God, his Holy Angels, and Men; when we *pray*, we do not plead or argue with God, but we humbly declare our purposes, and our requests, if they are serious, become our vows; when we *praise* him, we cause not our voices to be heard on high, but we humbly breath out our hearts to him, having no greater present for his Love. Lastly, when we receive the *Holy Communion*, we devote our selves

selves to Him with all the solemnities of fealty and friendship; and how stupendious soever a misery some have made of that Act of Worship, (by straining the holy Expressions of the Fathers into an *αποθεωσις* of it) yet in this our plain despis'd notion, 'tis an excellent Instrument of uniting us to the *Holy Jesus in spirit*, and if we believe Him, *the flesh profiteth nothing*.

John 6. 63.

Briefly, the summ of all that Goodness, that can make us acceptable to God, to others, to our selves; is *Humility, Charity, and purity of Spirit*. For the first, Men never see themselves in a true light (those especially who have few or none superiour to them upon Earth) but when they stand in His Presence, there the shadows flye away, and they (as Job) see and abhor themselves in dust and ashes, there men of all degrees are found to be lighter than vanity. How great improvement Charity gains by it, will be the next enquiry: But how is it possible, that we, who live in continual familiarity with the World (chiefly those who are under no restraints of want or fear) should keep our selves undefiled, without those solemn retirements from it, whereby we may disintangle our Minds from the Cares and Pleasures of it, and by *tasting the good things of the world to come*, correct the keenness of our Appetites to this?

'Tis to be expected, that some should reply to this Discourse, Hath the Temple then mono-

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poliz'd all Goodness ? Is Grace appropriated only to the *Priests Lips* ? Can Reason do nothing without those dull Formalities ? Were not *Greece and Rome* as fruitful of happy Spirits, as the *City that was watered with the River of God* ?

2 Cor. 4. 7. God forbid, that *we poor earthen Vessels* should ever arrogate any power over the *Treasures* committed to us ! And would to God all the Courts of Princes, the Seats of Justice, and Schools of Learning, were holy as the *Courts of the Lords House* ! But if many of the *inquiries*, of the best natural dispositions, of the strongest faculties, and of the greatest advantages of education and observation, do yet fall short of those Virtues that may thence be expected, there is no reason to be given for it, but their neglects of the Ministry of Religion ; and by this God lets the World see, that He is not to be left out in a business that so wholly depends upon Him, that whosoever

1 Cor. 3. 6. *plants or waters, He alone must give the increase.* 'Tis no doubt, but the Capitol in *Rome*, and the Schools at *Athens*, had some Souls in them, not commonly to be march'd in our best Oratories, but we find none such, who had not a strong sense of, and awful regard to the Deity, though their Notions and Worship run muddy and foul, falling into the *Countrey stream* ; and if they were better with less help than we, the more only is our blame : Let us not charge the *Vineyard*

of

of Gods own planting for a barren Soil, since the *Wildernes* hath been so fruitful.

2. But this is not all the benefit we gain by our *Service of God*; when the World is well awakened out of its enthusiastick slumber and giddiness, Men will see that *Religion* was not thorn for a Recluse to the *Church*, but whatever is good for the Souls, is likewise so for the Societies of Men: Now the Worship of God being so fit (as I have shown) to beget in us those dispositions, which are (not the Ornaments of a Cloyster, but the Pillars of the Earth, and) as necessary to the very Being of a Society, as the Air they breath in, or the Ground they tread on, doth on that score turn to a vast accompt: Upon which the wisest Heathens have declared it to be *σωτηριον* Plur. *νομιμον*, και νομοθεσιον *επειτα*: But of this I shall give but two Instances, but they are such, wherein the peace and prosperity of Men is wholly bound.

1. *A cheerful submission and regard to their several Superiours.*

2. *A mutual confidence in one another.*

How mean and humble soever *Piety* looks, though it dazles not the Eyes as splendour, nor terrifies the Fancy as power doth, yet it arrests the Heart with a more irresistible force than either; for it flakes that envy, tames that stubbornness, and layes those jealousies, which those

are apt to raise, and haunt uneasie minds: For who will grudge to submit to, fear any evil from, or dare any evil to him, that is a lover and beloved of his God? So the Authority of *Parents, Priests, Masters, and Magistrates*, is at once sweetened and reinforc'd. Thus the Heathens descents of their Rulers from their Gods, their frequent inspirations by, and familiar converses with them; were not the contrivance of their Fancy, but their Wisdom: 'Twas the *Sacrifice* that served both the Capitol and the Camp, whetted their Wits and their Swords, made them strong Laws, won them rich Provinces, and two of the wisest Empires now in the World stand upon the Credit of a *Prophet* and a *Priest*. Thus *Moses* his continual Addresses to God, awed that stubborn People, as much as his powerful Rod, that *turned the hard Rock into a Spring of Waters*. But we need not go so far, we our selves have sufficiently felt the deep impressions of a *pretended devotion*, when a days fasting (or *seeking God*) hath more enraged Men to the spoil, than the greatest largesse could. And though the most barbarous usage of the *most Pious King*, may seem to weaken the security of *Religion*, yet we must remember, that there were a People, from whose fury the real Divinity of our Saviour, without his Legions of Angels, could not defend Him. But I hope there are none among us so far relaps'd,

relaps'd, whom after so much mercy, an equal Piety would not recover and overcome.

2. *The Worship of God* begets a good confidence among Men: Did it no more than make them known and familiar to each other, and remove that strangeness which begets suspicion, it were not quite contemptible; but this is the least of its virtue. Freedom of converse is the best means to assure Men of each other, they that communicate their thoughts and purposes exchange minds, and give the greatest mutual hostages they can. Now if our Tongues keep pace with our Service, and our Hearts with them, there is none more intimate, though not so particular, conversation as here; where, if we mark what we say, we joyntly discover our weightiest thoughts, our highest designs, our nearest inclinations, yea, so ingenuous and free we are, as not to dissemble our very necessities and infirmities: All this we do, or we do nothing, when we *confess* and *pray* together; and to hatch us yet closer, our Prayers are Vows of Charity, when we lift up our hands to Heaven, we strike them with each other, for we beg Gods compassion and mercies, on condition of our own; and what is all we come to hear, but such Arguments, such Examples of Love and good will, as will link us together, either in love or condemnation: But if we go higher, to the *Feast of Charity*,

rity, there are all those endearments of *bleeding love*, and *flowing plenty*, which may tame and win the fiercest Natures; in all which (*behold and wonder!*) the *God of Love and Peace* Himself becomes a *Mediator* betwixt us, using all the motives of his Authority and Love, to lay our quarrellous lusts, and unite us in an everlasting friendship. But if our *Service* reach not the perfection of its design, yet this great good it usually doth, it begets a good opinion of Mens Consciences, which is the best hold they can have of each other; so the *Easterns* ratified their Covenants with Sacrifice, and the foulest Character of *Doeg's* Treachery to David was, that they took *sweet counsel together*, and went into the *House of God* like friends. And now, if our worshipping God together proves not so strong a cement of friendship as trading, or fighting, or drinking together, it is because we make our *gain*, our *glory*, and our *belly* our God, in that the mediation of these is more powerful with us, than that of our great God and Saviour. Lastly, 'tis to be hoped, that (after so sad experience) none will lay the charge of those Contentions and Wars, that have wasted the Church, at her doors; 'tis not *Gods Service*, but the service of Mens *lusts* and *passions* (that for their better credit take that name) which hath done those mischiefs, but if the *Religious Feuds* have still been (as is observed) the most fatal, it makes

makes good the truth, for their *Friendships* have at the same time been most firm.

3. Lastly, if at the foot of this accompt I add, that the *Service of God* fits us for his *eternal vision*, it will (to us that hope and pray for that happiness) be judged very profitable; so closely are the Interests of both Worlds connected, that whatever disposes us to live *well* and *happily* here, fits us likewise for *life eternal*; for neither will our Natures be otherwise changed, than from the bondage of our *corruptible bodies*; nor our Service, Phil. 3. *last*. than from those *rudiments of this world*, prayer and penitence, which our present sinful and necessitous state of Pilgrimage requires; the Blessed Angels ever hearken to the *Voice of his Word*, and never cease Psa. 103. to give glory and honour to God; Mens future portions 2 Co. Rev. 4. 8. will not be assign'd them according to their *hopes*, but their *habits*; they therefore that have spent all their days in the *Tents of wickedness*, whose tongues have been full of cursing and bitterness, whose hands have never been lift up but to violence or vanity, without some more sudden, violent, and miraculous change, than they have any ground to hope for, would be utterly incapable to be happy in that Society, in those Employments, to which they have been so wholly estranged. But how easie, how pleasant will our passage be, from the *Courts of Gods House* to the *Holy of Holies*? How ready, how joyful shall we be, to joyn with

with the Heavenly Quire in their *Hallelujahs*?

Thus useful it is to serve God, to our *Souls*,
to our *Societies*, to our *Hopes of Heaven*;
and yet it is too sadly true, that too many
are neither the fitter to live nor to dye for it,
and that's the matter of the last Enquiry,
viz.

3. How it becomes so vain, it must be from
one of these Causes:

1. *That Men misapply it to a wrong end*, or
2. *That they manage it a wrong way*, either of
which must needs render the best things
useless.

1. There are too many so gross, as to think
there is no profit but 20 *per cent.* nor gain but
ready money. This was the *Jews* humour, who
brought their Sacrifice as to a *Market*, not an
Altar, and came to barter the *Flesh and Blood* of
their *Beasts* for fair *Harvests* and full *Vintages*,
and when they missed, complained *all was in vain*.
That the Service of God hath a friendly regard
to worldly prosperity, is evident, because it in-
clines Men to be serious, engages them to be
honest, diligent, and temperate in all things,
and inspires them with that calmness of mind, and
comfortable trust in Gods Providence, which are
surer ways to prosperity, than all the little slights
of the *Mammonist*; but if we expect more from it,
we defeat it, and deceive our selves.

Others,

Others, that would be more *spiritual*, put not their Devotion to that drudgery, which is fitter for the sweat of their brows; all the gain they expect from it, is to have their Fancies a little refresh'd, their Wits exercised, their Opinions, and perhaps their Lusts soothed, and (if it so happen) away go they, well satisfied, though indeed *poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked*; but, if this be all their aim, they might have gain'd as much in the Fields or the Theatre. Great is that joy, and full of glory, that all pious Souls have in their Devotions; but 'tis not such as is born of noise or art, and dyes with it, but that more solid and lasting, that springs from the sense of Goodness entring like light and health into the Soul.

Lastly, some perhaps are so vain, as to hope by their Service to raise a mighty Interest in Heaven, and by their loud importunities, or more studied addresses, to be able to tyre or charm the Almighty, to do what they will, without any regard to any impressions made on their own Spirits. What a wild conceit is this of our Service, which is enough to spoil it, were it winged with the ardours of Angels? Can Men be serious, and think that their Confessions can inform Him of more than He knows of them? that their Petitions can direct Him what to do? or that their Language and Passions can overcome Him against

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his Will? No, no! we *confess* only to the melting down our own Iron necks, we *pray* to excite and engage our own stupid and false hearts, we *intercede* to enlarge our charity, we *praise* and *laud* Him to increase his love in us; so much as is the influence of our Service upon our selves, so much only is our gain; if this be not our aim, we only *sow the Wind, and may reap the Whirlwind.*

2. The other Cause of the vanity of our Service, is our using it a wrong way. 'Tis too common with us to post it off (as a piece of *Knight-service*) to a Proxy, and to think we have nothing to do in it, but to lend an Eye, or an Ear, to make a dumb shew, or a formal noise. Were the Holy Offices of Religion some common vile drudgery, or some powerful Charms or Spells, they would not deserve or need our thoughts; but they are of another nature, wise and reasonable Instruments for our good, and therefore require an *intent mind*, and an *honest and good heart*, to make them effectual. If Men come beforehand resolved, that *hearing they will not hear, nor consider*, though the *Angels*, or the *Holy Jesus* would again descend, they would baffle their Ministry. The Ground we stand on is not so Holy, but if we do not *αὐτοῦ ποιεῖν*, *keep our feet when we come into the House of God*, we may return as impure as we came; nor is the Air so fine, as to cleanse us from all pollution, by the meer ventilation of it;
Moses

Pyth. Symb.
 Eccles. 5. 1.

Moses his Tabernacle, nor *Solomon's* Temple, (though they had the *Shecinah*, the Glory of the Lord filling them) could not hallow a careless Worshipper: Did we negotiate our business, our Trade, with as little thoughtfulness as we pray and hear, our gains would come in but slowly; we need not indeed that subtilty, and those cautions, in our dealings with God, as with Men, yet certainly He alone is not to be served, nor our Souls only to be improved, without any thoughts or care for them. And indeed, how is it possible, that such excellent Prayers, so often sent up to the Throne of Grace, should perish in the Air? that all the powerful perswasives to Goodness, that Heaven and Earth afford, which ring continually in our Ears, should never reach our Hearts? that having one Advocate within us to help our Infirmities, and another in Heaven to present our Services, yet they should be still ineffectual? It could not be, but that we only are inexorable, and will not hear our own Prayers; we are imperfwaisible, and will not believe our own selves, our own Consciences: We *hear* and *approve*, and yet we *reject* the Counsels of God; we cry to God for *mercy*, and yet will have none upon our selves; we ask for *grace*, and yet will not take it when 'tis offered to us, or *turn it into wantonness*. Thus, whilst we anticipate our latter end, and stand like Tombs in the Church, full

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of uncleanness, what good can we expect? When the *sacrifice* fell, but the beast liv'd in Men; when the *incense* ascended, but their *filthiness* remained in their skirts; when the Air was filled, and every thing moved with their cryes, but their own insensate hearts; then had the Prophet Jer. 7. 4, 8. reason to complain, *Ye trust in lying words, saying, the Temple of the Lord; the Temple of the Lord, ye trust in lying words which cannot profit; and 'tis no wonder to hear themselves complain, It is in vain to serve God.*

And now upon the whole we may conclude, 1. what a necessary connexion there is betwixt the Services of *Worship* and *Obedience*: I pray it may never happen to these, as it hath done to others as near Allies (Faith and Good Works, Reason and Grace) to be put at odds, and both to lose by a needless competition; and yet our practice bids too fair for putting a doctrinal difference betwixt these; why else do we offer God, an *hour* or *two's* attendance for a whole *weeks* licentiousness, a few *bows* and *Amens* for a many high *provocations*? We run deeply in debt to his Justice, in confidence, that the next time we wait on Him in his House, we shall clear all, and then, as if we had left Him our Debitor, we forbear not any thing our lusts do call for. Thus we make our Christian-Sabboth and Service a *rest* from our *sins*, but in the worst sense, that is, only a short

short pause, to take breath and heart to pursue them with a greater resolution. Were our *God* some *Topical* one, as those of the *Hills* and *Valleys* of old, whose Authority were shut up within their Walls, then this might pass for *Worship*, but whatever we call it, 'tis but a base and scornful Flattery, fit for an *Idol that is nothing*. God forbid we should any of us serve our *Friend*, our *Benefactor*, our *King*, as we do our *God*! that is, come and stand demurely in his presence, accuse our selves and vow amendment; hear all he can promise or threaten to engage us to it, and immediately take every trifling occasion to rebel against him. If we need not *obey* Him, why are we so foolish to *worship* Him? If we must *worship* Him, why are we so false to *disobey* Him? Is his Being so *glorious*, to deserve that; and are his Laws so *contemptible*, to endure this? We need not use so much *ceremony* to be wicked and miserable. Let us take heed lest He justly reward us for such daring mockery, that is, *laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh as desolation, and our destruction as a whirlwind.* Prov. 1.26, 27.

And as our *worship* without *obedience* is vain, so our *obedience* without *worship* is impossible: We complain against the corrupt manners of the Age, and cry out, *From the sole of the feet even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores; and what do our* com-

complaints, but only fret and exasperate? what can all our Arts do, but only palliate the Evil? How shall we be mended, whilst our Souls are out of frame? and how shall we ever recover our *ancient Virtues*, without that *ancient seriousness in Religion*, which hath ever been observed to be the particular *Genius* of this Nation, yea even then, when it fell infinitely short of those great advantages it now enjoys? Can *Virtue* rise out of the dust, or *Righteousness* spring out of the earth, or *Sobriety* and *Purity* grow out of our corrupt lusts? Can knowledge or reasoning alone subdue those evil habits, they have been so long used to abet and maintain? *Mercies* have made us wanton, and *Judgments* stupid, and we have been too miserable, and are yet too happy to be mended, without the *mighty grace of God*. This then is the great, the fundamental Evil, the source of all the rest, that we neglect or pervert the greatest and only remedy he hath appointed for our cure, that we trifle with God in his Service, that should procure those succours, without which we shall never be better; whilst some Men make it their *sport*, others their *trade*, some the matter of their *contention*, and some few the *entertainment* of their idle time: Whilst we thus abuse Gods counsel and assistance, what hope can remain for us? Were that breath bestowed in *bearty prayers*, that is spent in *fruitless*
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murmurings, did we use that thoughtfulness in our *addresses to God*, that we lose in our vain contrivances, they would no doubt turn to a better accompt than they do: When we have wearied our selves with our *loud complaints*, and our little remedies, we may find at length, that 'tis as impossible to mend, as to make a *World*, or a *Soul*, without *God*. And however in the days of our *prosperity* we trifle with Him as an useleſs thing, without whom we can shift well enough, yet *when distress* Prov. 7. 28. and *anguish cometh upon us*, we shall, with much more earnestness, but as little success, call upon him, but he will not answer, seek him early, but shall not find him, as the tormented Glutton in Hell Luk. 16. 19. (where there is a *faith though trembling*, a *devotion though despairing*) begg'd one drop of refreshment, but it could not be granted him. What help then are we to expect from these, who talk at the rate of those in the Text, I mean not the wild *Enthusiasts* only, (whose zeal is as keen against *Courts* as *Churches*, were they not better guarded) but those that would be the *Restorers of Reason*, the *Defenders of the Liberties of Nature*, who would free the *Countrey* from the impostures of those *wily Craftsmen*, who cry up this their *Diana* to get them utterance for their shrines. Whosoever he be, that makes *Gods Worship* an Engin to keep up his own, 2 Theſſ. 2. 4. 8. who-
 ever he be that sits in the *Temple of God*, to exalt
 him-

himself above all that is called God, we pray, as the Apostle prophesieth, that God would destroy them with the spirit of his mouth. But sure all Scripture is not Bell and the Dragon, nor all houses of prayer become dens of thieves; were there any close mysteries, any secret adyta, any pretences to inspirations or miraculous powers, in our Worship, then they might suspect some juggling; but when every part and passage is plain and open (as the Book that contains it) to the meanest Worshipper, what is it they can be jealous of? And would they would consider, e're they cry down with it, even to the ground, whither Schools, and Colledges, and Courts, do not lean on the same Foundation! Were the Names of Virtue and Goodness, were Mens own Nature, and the Happiness of the World, truly dear to them, the Names of the Great God the Maker of the World, Father of Spirits, and Fountain of Goodness, and of the Holy Jesus the Restorer and Saviour of them, would be highly venerable to them, and all the Offices of Adoration to them would be the most wise and serious actions of their life. How much then do they deserve the care and love of us all! those especially, who have not only the Government of Men, but the highest, the tenderest Trust imaginable (greater than that of *Durandus* his Angels) committed to their charge; who though they cannot with their foot stop the swelling Tide, yet

yet by their *hands* and *tongue* may check the *Land-flood* of *profaneness* and *barbarism*, and by Gods blessing say, *Thou shalt go no further*, and so help to save an Age of Souls, which else must perish at their charge; whose Examples are able to retort all the Arguments of Irreligion upon its own breast, whose very countenance and behaviour is able to demonstrate, far more effectually than all our faint breath, that *'Tis not in vain to serve God*.

To conclude, This weak accompt I have given of the usefulness of *Religious Worship*, hath no other desire than to remove that ugly vizor, that hath disfigured, not only the Faces of the *Votaries*, but even that of *Religion* it self, and made it look like a dismal and *chagrene* thing; and so hath it disguised its native loveliness, that some enjoyn it, most look upon it as a meer *penance*, and to be sad and devout, to be religious and ghastly, are grown the same; so those in the *Text* make the *Service of God* consist in *walking mournfully before him*, which whether it relate to their *gate*, *look*, *habit* or *temper*, or *Ezra's fasting*, 'twas nothing that God required of them; the *Good God* never intended his *Service* should waste any Mans spirits, damp their hearts, drein their estates, or disturb the *World*; if any therefore be sick, be poor, be dispirited, or contentious, 'tis not this that hath made them so. There are indeed in *Religion* some sharp Medicines, and if these put Men

to pain and sorrow, they are to blame their intemperance, that hath made them necessary, and to call in the hopes of health, to make them tolerable; and yet there is not any the least bodily necessity, the meanest worldly advantage, no nor the vilest lust, but puts Men to more torment and slavery, forces them to bow, to watch, to pray, to kiss the dust, more than the most painful addresses of the humblest Suppliant and Penitent, under the first and purest Discipline of the Church.

Josh. 9. 23.

1 Kings 18.
28, 29.

Did God require some hard and heavy things of us, were our Service in the Church as tiresome as that of the Gibeonites in the Temple; or as cruel as that of Baal's Votaries, and to as little purpose; then might we say, as they do, (ch. 1. 13.) *What a weariness is it?* But since He asks no more, than that we rest from our labours, and come together into his presence, that we worship, and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker, that we laud and love his Name, that we confess and forsake our sins which have no other fruit but sorrow and shame, and that we hear and obey his Laws that our Souls may live; let us never repine to give Him this reasonable Service, which will so abundantly reward us, enrich our Souls with goodness, unite our hearts in love, and prepare us for the service

vice and joys of *Angels* and perfected *Spirits*,
by the Merits of *Jesus Christ* our Saviour :
To whom, with the *Father*, and the *Holy*
Ghost, be all *Honour*, *Worship*, and *Obedience*
given, world without end. AMEN.

F I N I S.
